515 We have not been able to learn anything about the ceremonies of
184 protection against the bivur. However, Akam Eyene told us that when a member of the buiti has inadvertently eaten the flesh of his protecting animal, which is absolutely forbidden, he holds a meeting called dzimba in the course of which the wrongdoer, after dancing, presents his case. Then the [77] head of the buiti absolves him, spitting scrapings of the bark of the ovaṅ onto his head.

525 The buiti has a secret language. Akam Eyene gave us only the
198 secret names of certain of its initiates, which correspond to the animals chosen as protectors:

He himself	called	ndzikwe	chimpanzee
Ondo Ngema	—	ngilabongo	gorilla
Akum Eyene	—	esingi	tiger cat
Ngema Eyene	—	mitumbu	panther
Bekeka Yebe	—	mogabene	elephant
Angwe Nseme	—	menyanga	snake
Mba Minkwe	—	meyasamba	rooster
Kumeyeme	—	mepeku	eagle
Abaga	—	ndzobe	wildcat

771 V. Totemism. Despite all questions which we have put to many natives of various tribes, we have not been able to find any signs of totemism. We were only told of instances of individual unions with animals, as in the buiti or following an akaga.

Family and Collective Life

000 In this chapter we will examine the life of the individual in the family and in the social group, from his conception until his death, in corporating into this framework the family and tribal organization as well as relations with strangers.

842 Conception (menoṅ bum). A woman, we have been told by our
833 male and female informants, cannot conceive until after she has
841 menstruated four times. She is, in fact, forbidden to have sexual intercourse before her fourth period. At her first menses, the woman tells her mother or her mother-in-law if she is married (usually her mother-in-law, since there is hardly even a young girl, still with her family, without a husband); the latter henceforth supervises her more

as against the fruits of the earth) and flees to the west, land of the dead or the ancestors, where the frustrated elder son pursues him (1).

1. This association of the west with material goods, of the east with the produce of the land, is found again in the potlatch (bilaba), described further on.

Largeau and Grebert make of the usurping younger son the ancestor of the Whites, but Trilles has collected versions which he considers older, in which the younger son is the ancestor of the Bantu of the coast; these versions, moreover, exist side by side with Largeau's. It is possible that the association of the younger son with the Whites dates from the first trade contacts. /18/

Chapter 3

The Language

1. Distribution

The group as a whole is characterized by an unquestionable linguistic unity, which spreads across cultural and anthropological boundaries. I have earlier indicated the existence of Pahouinized tribes or tribes becoming Pahouinized, especially the Maka and the Kozimé. To these must be added the Pygmies living symbiotically with the Pahouin, and whose language they appear to have adopted to a very great extent, to a point where it is difficult to know for certain if they still possess a language of their own.

Moreover, Pahouin dialects tend to be used as a trade language in areas where, on the one hand, the Pahouin are but a minority, often as emigrants, or, on the other, in regions less advanced economically and socially than is their own habitat.

There are therefore:

a) A true Pahouin linguistic area: this is Pahouin country as described in the first chapter. There Pahouin is spoken as a mother tongue by the Pahouin themselves and in all probability by the Pygmies.

197 There it is spoken as a main language though not really a mother tongue by permanent or semipermanent immigrants, of whom the greatest number are the Bamiléké in the Cameroons and, in Gabon, the "Gabonese" of the Myéné linguistic group.

b) A Pahouinized area, including in the Cameroons the left bank of the middle Sanaga (Beti country, with Mangisa and Eton especially), Maka country around Abong-M'Bang, the left bank of the Dja in Jem and Dzimou country (1); in the Middle Congo, part of Ouesso District

1. Koch, in "Le petit bétail chez les Badjoué et Bikélé de Messaména /Small livestock among the Bajoué and Bikélé of Messamena/," Bulletin de la Société de Recherches congolaises, 13-14, March-June, 1946, gives striking examples of the penetration of Boulou into this region.

(in the west), that of the Souanké; in Gabon the left bank of the Ivindo, among the Bakwelé. Differences between the languages spoken in these areas and the Pahouin dialects are rapidly disappearing.

198 197 c) Areas in which Pahouin dialects serve as trade language, either between tribes with different languages, or for administrative and commercial relations, even for political and /19/ religious propaganda. In the Cameroons, Ewondo serves this purpose on the right bank of the middle Sanaga, in the M'Bam region, as well as on the left bank toward the Ubangi border in the Lom-and-Kadei region, especially in the Bertoua subdivision. Boulou has become the trade language of the Kribi region. In Spanish Guinea, Fang and Boulou are used as a common language by immigrants from the French territories. In Gabon the Myéné dialects are giving way to Fang, which is coming more and more into use, as far as the Congo-Ocean railway. In the large towns—Douala, Yaoundé, Libreville, Port-Gentil, and even Dolisie—Pahouin dialects are used by immigrants belonging to other linguistic groups.

197 The vigor of the major dialects—Boulou, Ewondo, Fang—comes not only from the enterprising character of the Pahouin but also from the work of missions which distribute a good deal of literature in these dialects, while the languages of some of the neighboring populations have not been transcribed or have only given rise to scanty publications.

2. Dialects

197 Guthrie lists seven dialects, including three principal ones: "YAUNDE, 197 BULU, Ntum, Meka, Zimu /Nzimu/, FAN, Make." It would probably be better to speak of three dialect areas corresponding to the three groups—Beti, Fang, Boulou—already defined, each area containing a predominant speech, which is always the one transcribed by missionaries. The importance of this sociological phenomenon is underlined by the fact that the transcribed dialects tend sometimes to extend beyond and sometimes to shrink within the corresponding ethnological area, in conjunction with nonlinguistic factors, the principal one being the religious affiliation of the speakers. Likewise, it is established that in certain areas a mother tongue coexists with a written dialect learned at mission schools and spoken by Christian converts.

The predominant dialect in the Beti area is Ewôndo, the working language of the Catholic mission, which is rapidly supplanting the Beti (Ati) dialects properly so called of the Sanaga Valley. The Eton dialect, for instance, which was more Ati than Pahouin on the eve of the 1914 war (Nekes), is today completely assimilated; Tsinga and Mangisa are on the way to being so. Finally, Ewôndo as a trade language is gaining ground in the north and east, as already indicated. In the south, on the contrary, though it may be replacing Bané and Fong and even be making superficial inroads into the Catholic cantons of the Boulou-speaking area; it is losing out to Boulou in the districts [191] evangelized by the American Presbyterian Mission. Thus the Bané, the Fong, and certain Protestant Ewôndo are in fact bilingual; they speak as their mother tongue a dialect close to Ewôndo, while they write, pray, or sing in Boulou.

197 Boulou is therefore gaining in the Ewôndo linguistic area in the north. Toward the east, it is gaining among the Mekaé and Kozimé, has supplanted Fang among the isolated Fang groups of the north, and serves as the cultivated language among the /20/ Cameroons Ntoumou and Mvaé (except for Catholics) and as a trade language at Kribi and in Spanish Guinea. It even competes with Fang as a written language in northern Gabon. In the Catholic sectors it is putting up quite a good resistance to Ewôndo, except where it comes in contact with Bané and Fong.

Fang has supplanted Ntoumou in the Woleu-N'Tem region—except in Bitam District, where it is in competition with Boulou—and

192 Maka-Ngumba, from Jem-Dzimu, and from coastal Bantu. The European contributions would come more from Coast English for Ewŏndo and Boulou, from Portuguese "sabir"* for Fang, but Coast

[148] /* A mixture of Arabic, French, Italian, Spanish, etc., used in the Levant and Africa. —Tr./

English is increasing its influence on the whole group, as French is doing. The Abbé Walker mentions Arabic influences, but the only authentic examples are extremely rare: I only know of banga (Indian hemp) and arki (alcohol).

3. Characteristics of the Language

193 Sentence structure follows the order: subject, verb, attributive complement, objective complement.

Thus: M'abolé évet zel = I moisten chief beard (I grease the chief's palm).

The qualifier, adverb or epithet, is usually but not always placed before the word modified:

abeñ minga = pretty woman; mbia mŏt = wicked man; ŏbe anen = rather large; but

anen abui = very large; bŏte bela = three people.

192 Trilles, in Totemism among the Fang (no. 166) (1), estimates

[128] 1. The numbers inside parentheses refer to corresponding numbers in the Bibliography, p. 179.

the vocabulary at 18,000 words, undoubtedly counting as separate words certain derivatives, especially verbal inflections, which could as well be classed with the radical form, as to Bates and Good; they obtained a Boulou vocabulary of about 7,000 words, which is far from being complete. The correct number must be near 10,000 to 12,000 at least. While the language has been enriched by European and non-Pahouin African loan words, it appears at the same time to have been impoverished by the loss of certain nuances of meaning, of technical or religious terms, of older literary or poetical figures

boil his own totem in the pot, but so has the practitioner, in order to counterbalance the power of the accused man's totem.

The red-hot iron test, éki biần or biần éki biần, is the third ordeal.

The accused man's knife is heated red hot, then pressed to his cheek; if the cheek is burnt, he is guilty; otherwise, he is declared innocent. He has the right to throw into the fire, in which the iron is heated, the ashes of his individual totem; he also has the right to rub with this same totem that part of his body to which the red-hot iron will be applied.

There is no need to dwell on how easy subterfuges would be, all the more so since before each ceremony the presumed culprit is allowed to apply a few strong poultices or substances to harden his skin. The totem would then be only more effective!

If declared innocent, the accused man nevertheless owes a sacrifice to his mvane, a debt that will be readily discharged.

In case of theft there are also three tests used, as follows:

for the otura biần, the practitioner lights a large fire in the middle of the village, fed with special kinds of wood. When the fire has caught well, he throws an armful of wet leaves on it; he then moves back, having pronounced above the rising smoke certain magical words. The column of smoke at first rises straight up; suddenly, without wind (often there is not a breath), without any visible physical action on the part of the practitioner or anyone else (because they are all at a distance), it curves inward, we are told, eddies, and then advances towards a hut which it completely envelopes. The hut's owner is immediately seized and declared guilty [562]; however, he can insist on drinking the test poison, provided that he is buying back his life for the first time. One cannot redeem oneself from the test poison.

The smoke test has always seemed to me one of the most difficult to explain. I have witnessed it several times and in spite of the closest attention have not been able to perceive the least trickery.

A second test is the following: the practitioner lies on the ground and appears to listen to mysterious voices which are heard, in fact, as if coming out of the earth. Probably a simple effect of

ventriloquism is involved; certain practitioners are past masters at it. The voices mention three names, which the practitioner repeats aloud. Each of the presumed culprits must then bring a fowl; these are slaughtered by the practitioner and their blood is poured on the ground. The first sign is deduced from the way in which the drops fall and the forms they take. The fowls are then cut open, and the position of the liver and the final contractions of nerves and muscles corroborate the first indications.

The totem plays only an inconspicuous part in this test, which in any case is rarely used nowadays.

The most frequent test is the akala-nkal, thus called after the fetish nkal, which is kept in an antelope horn or large snail (ngôn). The practitioner heats water, mixing in different kinds of plants, and adds, to satisfy those who may think they are suspected, some of the ashes of their totemic sacrifice.

When evening comes, every man prepares a fire of wood and bamboo in front of his hut. The chief then goes through the brightly lit village, invoking guardian spirits and threatening the thief or thieves with terrible vengeance. Then he runs and jumps over all the bonfires, the men and women of the village following after him. If a man or woman should touch one of the brands with a foot so as to make it roll off the fire, that person is declared guilty. While undergoing the nkal test, the chief carries his totem in his hand. If all come through safely, the chief starts again on his own, this time holding the village totem, show everybody's innocence even more. [563]

After this first trial, which everyone usually gets through with the greatest ease, the one or more accused if such there be, if not, all the men of the village, take a drink of lustral water which the practitioner has just boiled; then they take a few steps and spit on the nkal, which has been put on the ground. Each person then steps over the nkal, swearing his innocence, and starts once more to leap over all the bonfires. If he is not hurt, he is declared innocent. It is extremely rare that, from the effects of the poison or for some other reason, one or another does not stumble over a brand and knock it out of the fire. He is thereupon declared guilty; if he denies it, he will have to drink the éôô; if on the contrary, he saves his life but has to repay the theft twice over.